

# Evard munch's the scream

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Analysis of Edvard Munch's "The Scream" Just a few months ago, a painting by the famous Norwegian painter Edvard Munch titled "The Scream", was sold in an auction for an unprecedented \$120 million American dollars. Even at first glance, it is easy to notice why this artwork is so valuable and iconic. The vibrant colors used in the painting along with the emotions it conveys all stand out very distinctly. The screaming man's expression, the colors, as well as the swirling motion of the sky, work together to invoke in its audience primal feelings.

Initial impressions of the painting are often those feelings associated with the sublime, foreboding, angst, and a bit of terror, thrown in for good measure. All in all, this very famous expressionist piece of art is trying to express to its audience the absolute fearsomeness and awesomeness in nature. "The Scream" is a contrast between the vastness and majesty of nature and the insubstantiality of mankind. "The Scream" was painted by Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch between 1893 and 1910 during the Expressionist period.

According to Dictionary.com, expressionism is, "a style of art developed in the 20th century, characterized chiefly by heavy, often black lines that define forms, sharply contrasting, often vivid colors, and subjective or symbolic treatment of thematic material" (dictionary.com). During this period, artists such as Munch put heavy emphasis on perspectives of the individual as well as emotional angst. The painting itself was painted on a cardboard canvas with oils and is roughly 36 inches high by 28 inches wide. The size of the painting shows that the "screaming" figure in the foreground is very close to lifesize, which makes it the focal point of attention, and

causes the audience to first notice the figure and its chilling expression followed by the stark contrasts of light and dark behind the figure, and it is here where the painting derives much of its emotion. Behind the “screaming” man is a river which flows into the night, which bleeds into day.

Munch's use of light and dark colors seems to represent calm and anguish, respectively. In the background of the painting are two figures walking into the the horizon, not paying any mind to the blood-red sky nor the despairing man screaming on the bridge. The figures walking away could be seen as Munch's emphasis on the individual's perspective. The screaming man is the individual and he realizes both the benevolence and malevolence of nature and can do nothing but scream.

The two featureless figures in the background could represent Munch's expression of the group or group mentality, who are only concerned with their daily lives and are completely unaware of the daunting vastness of nature presented right before their eyes. Perhaps this is Munch's way to describe how he feels about society as a whole. He feels disconnected from the group as only he notices the horror about his surroundings. Only he sees the violence in the landscape. The direction of the painting seems to be counter-clockwise, originating from the screamer's head.

The reason for this could be that Munch was showing us that perhaps the “screaming” man is projecting his realities outward, as it spreads from the river to the bloodstained skies. According to the Art History Guide, “Munch suffered from agoraphobia, which could explain why the vast open space in the background gives the feeling of being overwhelm[ed]” (Arthistoryguide.com). This would also explain the main figure's expression of fear

and anxiety. The reason why Munch painted this piece has been debated throughout the years.

However, sometimes some explanations can be the most obvious ones. In an article found on Wikipedia, regarding the painting, it describes how Munch wrote, "" I was walking down the road with two friends when the sun set; suddenly, the sky turned as red as blood. I stopped and leaned against the fence, feeling unspeakably tired. Tongues of fire and blood stretched over the bluish black fjord. My friends went on walking, while I lagged behind, shivering with fear. Then I heard the enormous, infinite scream of nature. " (Wikipedia. org).

Judging by the main figure's pose, with his hands covering his ears in shock, one can assume that when he heard nature's scream, it was deafeningly loud. The sheer intensity of the volume along with the traumatic experience of existential angst is what is, most likely, producing the look of terror on the main figure's face. His facial expression is a very good translation of what Munch's idea of absolute terror might be. The colors in the background support this idea further through Munch's choice of powerful, expressive colors.

The deep crimson hues give off a feeling of danger, paranoia, and anxiety while the dark blues relates to loneliness or sadness. The terror is further exemplified with the figures in the background, his " companions", completely oblivious to the intense derangement the central figure is experiencing. Human beings have an innate need to be accepted or to belong, as such, the isolation, loneliness, and terror the screaming figure was

exhibiting must have been so abstract and profound that it could only be expressed in "The Scream".

In summary, Edvard Munch's masterpiece, "The Scream" is a painting that screams emotion. It was the style and composition that sparked the Expressionist movement in the late nineteenth century, which, in turn, evoked numerous other styles. With just one painting, Munch was able to portray an entire spectrum of human emotion ranging from calm to almost the violently sublime. It is no doubt that such a work was sold for a large fortune because of how iconic and breathtaking this painting is.

It represents a distant memory of an expressive period of time in human history where not everything was soap dramas, commercials, and the internet. It represented a time of artistic inspiration, an understanding and observance of something truly monolithic and omnipotent, nature. Works Cited "Expressionism." Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com, n.d. Web. 02 Jan. 2013. "The Scream by Edvard Munch: Art History & Picture of the Painting." The Scream by Edvard Munch: Art History & Picture of the Painting. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Jan. 2013. "Edvard Munch." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 01 June 2012. Web. 03 Jan. 2013.